



COMMUNITY
MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

P.O. Box 280 • 220 5th Avenue • Turtle Lake, North Dakota 58575 • (701)448-2331

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March 25, 1996

Office of the Secretary
Federal Communications Commission
Washington, DC 20554

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Dear Sirs:

I am writing on behalf of the Telecommunications Act of 1996. Community Memorial Hospital, a 35-bed hospital staffed by 2 physicians is currently using Telemedicine through St. Alexius Medical Center, a regional hospital approximately 60 miles from our facility. Our telemedicine equipment has been in place for approximately 5 months with an excellent results since its inception.

I see telemedicine as a key factor in rural healthcare for a number of reasons:

1. Most small communities have a high concentration of elderly citizens who are unable to drive or commute to larger cities for medical care. This gives the local facilities the opportunity to consult with specialists while keeping the elderly patient in town versus having to be transported long distances for medical follow-up.
2. Many patients seem to gain respect for their hometown physician because the primary care physician makes the same analysis and diagnosis as the specialist in the telemedicine consult. There is less lag time to act on treatment since both the specialist and the physician are working together to treat the patient at the same time.
3. It is often very difficult to recruit specialists for rural facilities. Telemedicine gives us an opportunity to utilize their expertise without the high recruitment costs or taking the specialist away from his/her daily practice to go to outreach facilities.

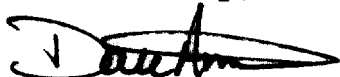
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Office of the Secretary
March 25, 1996
Page 2.

4. Telemedicine is an excellent form of technology which benefits patients first-hand. They can visibly see and talk with the physician directly. With the technological advances in communication, I see telemedicine as a key element for rural and urban medical centers to work together without competition. Once the equipment is installed, the only real expense is the monthly phone line connection.
5. Lastly, it does not take additional staff to run the telemedicine equipment. With minimal training the equipment can be handled by nursing staff while consultation is being performed.

I hope that this information is of help to you as you implement regulations on the Telecommunications Act of 1996. If you have any further questions in regards to this matter, please feel free to call me at 701-448-2331 and I'll be happy to assist you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dale Aman", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dale Aman
Assistant Administrator

cc: Brad Gibbens
UND Center for Rural Health